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My Experiences *in the* German Espionage

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WHY I DESERTED THE KAISER'S SECRET SERVICE AND CAME TO AMERICA, AFTER PERILOUS JOURNEY FROM SOUTH AFRICA, THROUGH ENGLAND AND HOLLAND TO GERMANY AND OUT AGAIN, OVER ROTTERDAM AND LONDON, DURING THE GREAT WAR.

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MY EXPERIENCES IN THE GERMAN ESPIONAGE

It took one of your American humorists to invent a man so bold and reckless that he made even himself afraid. And it took me, your humble servant, to be that man!

At least, I am inclined to believe so, as I look back over the last two years and review all the perils to which I voluntarily exposed myself during that period. For what reason? Solely for the pleasure and excitement of going through them, as far as I can make out.

I am thirty-two years old. I am German-born, of decent family and decent education. Since I was seventeen, South Africa has been my home. Some ten years ago my tastes led me to take up detective work, and whatever ability I possessed, coupled with hard work, has made me head of one of the principal detective agencies in that quarter of the world, with headquarters in Johannesburg, The Transvaal. So much by way of preamble to my story.

In 1914, when war was declared between Germany and France, I was in Durban, Natal. I had been there six days, having just returned from a trip to Europe—my seventh, by the way—in which I had visited Germany and England. All German subjects in Durban were ordered to report to Dr. Speyer, the German consul there. I reported with the rest,

and 168 of us, all of military age, were ordered to leave Durban on August 6 on the P. & O. liner Borda, just in from Australia, and bound for London via Capetown. We were to report to the German consul in London, and he would forward us to Germany, a perfectly legal and feasible arrangement, as at that time Great Britain had not entered the war and it was not expected that she would. So at least my 168 compatriots thought.

I knew better, for Dr. Speyer had taken me into his confidence. German officials expected war and were prepared for it. The 168, he told me, would undoubtedly be interned in a concentration camp somewhere en route, but I, he hoped, could get through. In that hope, he made me bearer of a sealed package of documents which I was to deliver to a certain person in London if I could, otherwise to destroy. I was warned that their discovery on my person would place me in a very serious position, and told that I need not undertake the mission unless I wished to.

I undertook it. Why? Not out of patriotism. I did not love Germany or Germans. I had been away too long, breathing another air. I did love Englishmen. On my trips home, I shortened my visits to my parents that I might have as long a time as possible in England. Germany bored me, and I was out of sympathy with their ideals and customs. But I loved adventure more than anything else. I was eager to undertake the "stunt" of getting myself and that packet through to its destina-

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tion. I was eager, too, to see something of the greatest war in history. I certainly did not propose to languish in captivity till it was over, and I knew that would certainly be my lot eventually if I remained in South Africa. Too many people there knew me as a German.

So I undertook the mission, and I too had strong hopes that I could put it through. I had been in South Africa so long that I believed that among strangers I could pass myself off as a South African, without nationality. My English had the typical accent of the Boer. And I dressed habitually in English fashion, Scotch tweed riding clothes and cap, bamboo cane, leather puttees and all the rest of it. And I had my wits.

My opportunity to test them came very soon. We were scarcely out of port when the wireless gave us word that Great Britain had declared war on Germany. There was high excitement. The captain of the Borda had received no specific orders, and knowing that his German passengers could not escape, he simply ordered the tables arranged so that Germans were placed by themselves in the dining saloon. The change was made in public, the first morning out, as the passengers entered the saloon for breakfast. The chief steward politely asked each his nationality, and the sheep were quickly parted from the goats.

My only hope lay in carrying matters with a high hand, and I took my place with the British passengers, none of whom knew I was a

German. Posing as a born South African of Boer descent I cultivated their acquaintance, which was later to help me in the plans I was already laying.

At Capetown, as I anticipated, ten British soldiers, armed with loaded rifles, were waiting on the dock, and only non-Germans were allowed to land. But I, clad in my ultra-English togs, was not questioned when I marched boldly down the gangplank with my new English friends and attached myself to a party of tourists for a motor trip around Table Mountain.

I knew Capetown well, and once clear of the ship set about solving my problem, which of course, was twofold. I wished, if possible, to escape detention and get on to London, whence I hoped, by luck, still to be able to make my way to Germany. And I had, in any case, to make sure the incriminating packet was not found on me in case I was subjected to arrest and search.

In Capetown I had one friend, South African manager for an insurance company, whom I knew I could trust. Begging him to ask no questions and seek no information whatsoever, I put my sealed packet into his care for the day, to be destroyed intact in case I should not ask for its return. I spent the afternoon and evening with him, and got him to return to the ship with me at midnight.

Just before we reached the pier I learned that all my 168 countrymen had been seized and marched off, bag and baggage, to a deten-

tion camp, and that the authorities, suspicious of me, were awaiting my return. There was nothing to do but walk straight aboard, where, in the saloon, I found my luggage under the guard of two Tommies. I blustered in with what you Americans call bluff, and demanded of the chief steward what such proceedings meant.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "but all Germans have been ordered to leave the ship, and these soldiers were set to guard your luggage till you were found."

How I blustered over that insult! I, a South African, a Boer who had fought and bled for my country, to be called a German—to be subjected to political arrest in my own bailiwick! I ordered my luggage put back in my cabin at once.

The steward humbly referred me to the captain, and leaving my friend to have a drink in the saloon, I sought that functionary, whom I found in his room chatting with the Cape-town agent of the line. Once more I sounded the whole gamut of righteous anger for their benefit.

The captain listened very quietly, and when I had finished put the question I had been expecting and preparing for all along. "If you are a South African," he said, "how does it happen that your ticket to London was bought and paid for by the German consul at Durban?"

I was ready for him there. "Unforeseen circumstances," I answered coolly. "The ship

sailed before England and Germany were at war. The German consul at Durban had 168 Germans to send to their fatherland by way of London—a proceeding perfectly legitimate at that time. Most of them could not even speak English, and he needed a man to see them safely through. Because I was a traveler, because I spoke seven languages, including English, Dutch and German, and because my work as head of a detective agency in Johannesburg had made me well known and trusted in all that part of Africa, he selected me, and part of my honorarium was my ticket. It was a perfectly natural transaction then, but of course now that England and Germany are at war I am put in a very disagreeable situation. I think it's up to you to help me out of it."

Instantly the captain reached for his telephone, which had a shore connection, and rang up the Capetown police! He told them who I claimed to be, and asked them to send a man to the Borda to identify me. You can imagine the pins and needles I sat on till he came, for I very well knew what would happen to me if my story were not corroborated. But luck was with me. In a short time a detective came aboard, who recognized me at once. He was able to say that he had known me for ten years, and did not think I was a German. My friend, the insurance manager, also confirmed my statements, and there were apologies and a friendly drink all round.

I retrieved my packet from my friend, and the next morning at daylight sailed on the

Borda, fully established as a reputable member of the ship's little world, and sure of getting through at least as far as London. As to what might befall me there it did not seem worth while to begin worrying yet.

There was an Australian parson aboard who was very close to the captain, and I struck up a friendship with him. In that way I learned of a number of wireless messages, the receipt of which was unknown to the passengers in general. For instance, as we neared the Canary Islands the captain was informed that a German armed merchantman, the Kaiser Wilhelm der Gross, had recently sunk several British ships.

A little later he received another wireless, purporting to come from a British man-of-war, telling him he could safely put in for coal to Las Palmas, in the Canaries. Instead, the canny officer immediately laid a course in the opposite direction, and his judgment was vindicated a few hours later when a British cruiser steamed alongside and gave us orders to keep clear of Las Palmas, as two British ships had just been sunk in the vicinity. The first message had been simply a decoy from the Kaiser Wilhelm.

The rest of the voyage was uneventful, and the day after the naval battle off Heligoland we steamed into the Thames and at Tillbury Docks were halted by a torpedo boat with orders that all non-British passengers should be sent ashore.

The order put me in a serious predicament,

because of my precious and deadly package of documents. I had but a minute for decision, and in that time slipped down to my cabin, put the packet into a weighted container I had already prepared for it, and chucked it out of the porthole into the secret recesses of the river. I was determined, if I erred at all, to err on the safe side.

As it turned out, I had erred. We foreigners —myself and half a dozen others, Russian, French and Belgian—were merely set ashore because the government was permitting no foreigners to sail up to London through the mine fields in the Thames. Neither our persons or our luggage were subjected to an examination, and within an hour we were going on to London by train.

I took rooms, as I often had before, at the Bedford Hotel in Southampton Row. My next problem was to get passage to Holland, and I could think of no one more likely to help me in that than Mr. Harold Irvine, the young mining magnate, who had been a particularly close friend of mine in South Africa. I telephoned him at once, and when he told me to call at his office the next morning, Wednesday, I felt my difficulties were at an end.

Promptly on the hour of my appointment I called at Irvine's office, wearing the tweed riding togs I always affected. Between one legging and the calf of my leg were hidden my German military papers and the passport issued to me by the consul at Durban, while

my coat pockets were stuffed with harmless personal papers.

I was asked to wait for a little, and was ushered into the luxuriously appointed directors' room. You will remember that I had been in Natal only six days when war was declared, and had just returned from Europe then. Irvine was one of the last men I had seen before I left London, and as I sat waiting for him to receive me I pictured to myself his surprise at seeing me back so soon.

The door to his office opened suddenly. Instead of looking into the smiilng face of my friend I found myself confronting two strangers whom I, as a detective, instantly recognized as brothers in the craft.

One of them held out his hand to me. "Wie gehts?" he asked.

It was hard to keep from smiling at the transparency of the trap. But I merely told him I did not understand.

"Come, come," said the other, also in German, "you certainly speak German."

"I don't know what you are saying," I told him, too, in English, and the pair were obliged to use that language before I would talk. Then I quickly learned what had happened. At that time any person who entertained or received in his home or place of business any German or Austrian subject without making a report to the police was liable to arrest and fine. Irvine, knowing how recently I had been in London, could not believe I had returned to South Africa at all. Believing I had been in

Germany and had returned to England as a spy, he had reported my arrival to Scotland Yard.

To the Scotland Yard men I repeated the same story I had told the captain of the Borda, and in proof that I had just come from South Africa showed the stub of my ticket. One of the detectives left the room then, and, while the other questioned me, confirmed my story at the office of the P. & O. line. But they were still suspicious.

"What are you going to do now?" one of them asked. I said I wanted to go to France and join the British colors.

"But Mr. Irvine tells us you want to go to Holland," the other put in promptly. "Why Holland, if you want to go to France?"

I had my story ready, and explained that some of my relatives had been in Germany when the war broke out. They had been sent to Holland, and I wanted to see them safely into England before I joined the army.

It was not a brilliant creation. But in the absence of any proof that I was a German—I could fairly feel that military passport burning me inside my legging!—and in the presence of the papers which amply corroborated the statements about my business in Jonhannesburg, it held water up to a certain extent. They became outwardly friendly and said that I might go, but must not attempt to leave London till a cable from South Africa confirmed everything.

Such a cable was the very last thing I

wanted. It would prove my German citizenship beyond a doubt. Also, I knew that I would be watched every moment I was in the city. My only hope was to elude the police before they were fairly on my trail. And any blunder on my part meant the detention camp.

So instead of returning to my hotel, where I very well knew a detective was also ready waiting for me, secure in the fact that I must come there for my luggage, I went direct to Cook's office and booked passage to Rotterdam on the Batavia IV, sailing that afternoon. I would not risk discovery by telephoning the hotel to have my luggage sent to the ship. I abandoned everything I had, and I suppose that the detectives later had the satisfaction of rummaging through my effects in a fruitless quest for enlightenment.

The Batavia sailed from Tillbury Docks—where the Borda had landed me, you remember—and there I ran into still more trouble. Instead of boarding the ship from a pier the passengers were put on a small tug in charge of government officers. We were counted as we went on board, and were told to remain on the upper deck until called elsewhere. Then the tug steamed out to midstream and anchored. "Passengers will go to the deck below and have their passports examined," the order was passed.

The passengers began to move below, and believing boldness to be the only course I made myself one of the first half dozen. But when

I saw the ordeal I must face I really believed that the game was up with me at last. We had to go one by one down a narrow stair, at the foot of which was a table. At the table sat an elderly officer in the uniform of the Dutch immigration service, flanked by two subordinates, while at either end stood an English detective. Escape seemed impossible.

One by one the passengers in front of me presented their passports, answered questions acceptably, and were permitted to pass on into the forward cabin of the tug. It came my turn: I said I had no passport. They asked me why. I told the same old story. I was a South African, I had no nationality, and I had started on my voyage before the war broke out. I was a helpless victim of circumstances.

And luck was with me—such luck as I would never have dared to hope for. That old Dutch officer had fought in the Boer war. He knew the Transvaal well, which gave him confidence that he could trip me if I was telling any lie. He questioned me in detail, asking for information which could only be known to one who had been there. I answered all his questions so clearly that he told the British officers it was plain I was telling the truth. He overrode all their objections about the irregularity of my papers, and I was passed on board the Batavia IV with the other passengers, who were once more counted to make sure there had been no stowaways on the tugs.

So I was through the lines at last, for of course the rest was easy. At Rotterdam, next

morning, I was the last man to leave the ship. Passports were again examined there, but this time I had one! I drew my German papers from my legging and showed them to the examining Dutch officer. In neutral Holland a German passport had the same validity as a British one. The officer stared in amazement to see such papers presented by a passenger from England, then understood, laughed, and congratulated me on my feat.

Free at last, I reported to the German consul in Rotterdam. He ordered me to proceed at once to Wesel, a German fortress on the Dutch frontier. At the border a naval officer met me with a motor car and escorted me into Wesel. And then something very disagreeable became plain to me. After all the risks I had taken to join my country's colors, I was being taken into Germany a prisoner. I was not permitted to speak to any one, and was taken directly into the fortress. I was evidently under grave suspicion. The reason for it soon became apparent.

My reception in the German fortress town of Wesel, on the Dutch frontier, was part of a comedy of errors which I found it difficult to laugh at at the time. I soon found that I was under as grave suspicion in Germany as ever I had been under in England. That rather netteld me, after all the risks I had taken and all the hardships I had endured to get back into the country. But the reason was plain enough, and natural enough, too, I must admit. My story was too good to be true. The authorities could not believe any German could have come, as I claimed to, from Natal to London on a British ship, and then again to Holland. They thought I must in reality be a British spy whose "escape" from England had been carefully arranged. Even my passport issued by the consul at Durban was regarded as an extremely successful forgery.

Luckily for me, I had brothers in Germany whose standing was above suspicion, one being a prominent advocate and one an acting officer of the army. They established my identity, but this required two days, during which time I was not allowed to walk outdoors except in company with an officer. But once my brothers had confirmed my story the mercury in the thermometer of my popularity shot up as high as it had previously been low. I

was made the lion of Wesel—a happening which confirmed an impression I had long since formed of the German mind, both military and civil. It was a small mind, without a very wide horizon. Trifles can be miraculous to it, providing they are novel trifles. Africa is a very long way off, to Wesel. Wesel had never heard before of a German who came all the way from Africa. So, to its people I was a startling curiosity. They pointed me out to each other in the cafes as "der Afrikander," and were surprised at the color of my skin. They had heard Africans were black men.

Among other proofs of confidence and admiration, I was offered a place in the German secret service. This was really flattering, for such positions are by no means easy to obtain. But I declined it. I had not come all that distance to play the spy in Amsterdam or Rotterdam. I wanted to see something of the war.

And I found means to obtain my wishes. I had brought a good deal of information with me. I had, for instance, by copying day by day the Borda's noon positions as they were posted on the bulletin board, established the new route followed by British merchantmen bound from Capetown to London. I had observed conditions in London, and had first-hand information of the "control" exercised over travelers entering and leaving England. All this was considered valuable, and because I had brought it, because I was considered to have shown a good deal of cleverness in my various escapes, and, also, I suppose, because

I was a detective and spoke many languages, I got that offer to enter the secret service.

"No," I said, "I want to be in the fighting. If I have done anything you consider worthy of reward, let me say what the reward shall be. Accept me as a volunteer, and assign me to the regiment which is closest to the enemy on the western front."

You will be surprised, perhaps, to learn that there can be any volunteers in a conscript army like the German. Strictly speaking, there cannot be.

But volunteer is the nearest English equivalent for Kriegsfreiwilliger. By meeting certain educational qualifications you used to be able —in times of peace—to postpone doing your four years in the army. Then if, in time of war, you come back of your own accord to serve with the colors, you are a Kriegsfreiwilliger, which carries certain privileges with it. Among other things, you can hope to become an officer if you have the grade qualifications.

So when Captain von Hahnke, in charge of the secret service bureau at Wesel, found I was unwilling to accept a place in his department, he took the necessary steps to aid me in my ambition of joining a regiment. "But if you are wounded or incapacitated for field service through sickness," he told me, "report back to me and I will take care of you in the secret service."

After a short period of training at a base camp I was appointed to the tenth company of the Fifty-seventh Infantry Regiment, and sent

to France. That was in October, 1914. The regiment was lying in the first line trenches about Aubers and La Bassee canal, and my ambition to have a part in the actual fighting in this greatest of all wars was soon amply gratified, for as a volunteer and "the African"—my story had lost nothing of its glamor for these untraveled Germans and the title still clung to me—I was given a post of honor. I was made one of the regimental couriers—the men who transmit the orders of the commanding officers to the under officers immediately with the troops. Such duty is perilous and often highly responsible.

Enough has been written already about the conditions of trench life and warfare, and I do not propose to bore you by writing more. One grows habituated to what at first seem its horrors and its terrors—the intermittent rain of missiles and explosives, the mud, the wet, the crude food and all the rest—as one can apparently become habituated to anything under the sun. One incident, however, I must tell you. About a hundred of us recruits had been drafted out from the base camp in a body, and just behind the first line trenches were drawn up for distribution to our various companies and regiments. As we stood there, in a field behind some strawstacks, a single English shell fell in the midst of us and exploded. Instantly the hundred of us vanished. The one man left in sight was a much-disgusted officer who called to us to fall in. What to him was an ordinary part of the day's work

was to our unaccustomed nerves a cataclysm. We were all prone in the mud and grass. It was not that we were afraid. There was no question of bravery or cowardice, only a question of nerves. One week later they were grenade-proof.

We had the British and the Indian troops in the sector of trenches opposed to our, and the trenches themselves had principally—water! It came up to our waists, and as the watches were arranged we made the best of it for twenty-four hours, when we were relieved by the other half of the regiment and "rested" for a day ourselves.

To call that interim a rest time still strikes me as a grim joke. There is far more rest in the trenches. To begin with, your officers bother you little there. The traditional Prussian martinet, as far as regards company officers and commanders, and even battalion commanders, has largely vanished, death and promotion in the early days of the war having accounted for most of the names on the active list. To replace the missing in their minor commands reserve officers have been called to duty, and since most of these have lived many years in civil life, they still reflect the civilian point of view. Also, in the trenches, one can have one's fill of sleep. There is nothing much else to do there. The smallest subdivision of a company is a group of eight men, and of these only two need be on watch at a time.

But in reserve, five miles behind the trenches, you get little chance to sleep. For

whatever has become of the old-time Prussian officer, the old-time Prussian sergeant still blooms there in all his glory, and it is on your sergeant, let me tell you, that most of your comfort depends.

For the rank and file, then, "rest time" means a continuous session with the sergeant. There are boots to be cleaned, uniforms to be scoured of the trench mud, rifles to be cleaned and oiled, baths to be taken, something to fill every hour of daylight. For me, however, those hours meant comparative freedom. As a Kriegsfreiwilliger, a courier and an "Afrikander" I tacitly took it for granted that I was free of small domestic obligations, and for some reason or other I was permitted to get away with it. I spent my vacations from the trenches making small patrols which, if they earned me no glory, made me immensely popular with the officers of the headquarters to which I was attached as courier.

I did not like the military food. The day we were in reserve it meant black coffee and a slice of poor rye bread for breakfast, a ladle of hot soup—made of vegetables, potatoes, barley and a modicum of wheat—with bread at noon; for supper more bread and coffee. That day, too, was served out to each man a bit of cheese or sausage or bacon, with more bread, which was destined to be his lunch in the trench next day.

In the trenches the day began at 5.30 with black coffee, brought up in buckets four or five miles from the field kitchen. At noon the

men devised what lunch they could, eating their cold snack or doing extremely primitive cooking in the dugouts. Potatoes saute with onions from the deserted fields about was a trench specialty. For supper of trench days, nothing at all was provided.

Such food did not appeal to me. As a matter of fact, it is not a proper ration, and men who have nothing else to eat eventually come down with digestive troubles. Hence my "patrols."

Combining the experience gained as a detective and a free ranger of the veldt I thoroughly explored the country in our rear. Chickens, eggs, butter, milk and wine were my unmilitant objective, and I may add that my operations were highly successful. No other headquarters mess on that whole front lived in such fields of clover as mine did. I must add, once more, that the French peasants did not suffer from my campaign. There was no looting. Everything I took was paid for on the spot, in good money and at full price. "The African" became a French institution, too.

But those pleasant days—I really call them pleasant, looking back—were not to last. Along in December, at the time of the first snows, the exposure and the constant soaking proved too much for me. I came down with the fever and was sent to the hopistal at La Bassee, a very sick man, barely able to move, Once more it looked as if the jig were up.

I chafed particularly under the conditions,

because as the time drew on toward Christmas the air was full of rumors of great things soon to come. Apparently if I was ever to see fighting of the first magnitude I must see it then. So on December 20 I took French leave of the hospital and hobbled out to the front. The major, mindful of the eggs, butter and wine he owned to me, let me stay, and so, by luck, I was able to be present at one of the hottest actions of the whole war, that great storming and capture of the British first line trenches at La Bassee, which took place December 20 and 21, 1914, one of the many occasions on which that bloodstained wrinkle in the earth known as the International Trench at La Bassee was captured by one party or other. It lies in a hollow, is flooded with water and is attackabel from all directions. During one period of twenty days it was held successively by the troops of three different nations.

We attacked at 8 a. m., after a night of preparation by the artillery, and I must admit at once that my part was purely ornamental, and not very decorative at that. One night in the flooded trenches had brought my fever all back. However, I was there, and when the charge was sounded managed to scramble and roll out of our trench onto the long-desired strip of No Man's Land, and hobbled about there, using my rifle as a crutch, until the enemy had been obliged to run back along his traverses to his second line. Then outraged Nature rebeled and struck me motionless. I

could not move a single muscle. Even my tongue and lips were stiff.

The stretcher bearers took me back to the field hospital at La Bassee; from there, with the next batch of sick and wounded, I was removed further to the rear—in a springless farm cart which I still remember with no feeling of affection—to the hospital at Marquilles. Followed spells of hospital at Carvin, Dunn, Douai, and finally Nurnberg, where for the first time we came under the care of women as nurses. Finally, at the beginning of April, 1915, I was pronounced convalescent and sent to the regimental base hospital of the Fifty-seventh, at the same fortress of Wesel, where I had first entered Germany, and to which, you may remember, Captain von Hahnke, in charge of the secret service bureau there, had invited me to report in case anything led me to reconsider my determination not to enter his branch of the service.

Once more I find myself compelled to speak of food. Theoretically, the food supply of German military hospitals is excellent. The doctors order without stinting special diet for any patient who needs it, and special diet comprises such delicacies as eggs, ham, butter, cocoa and fresh milk. The orders are given in all good faith, but in my experience are not always carried out. There seems to be a fair supply of such special provisions, but they sometimes fail to reach their intended goal. If you wonder why, ask the hospital cooks and orderlies. I have seen them frying up four

eggs apiece for their own use. And I have knowledge of their selling hospital food supplies to French villagers who had money to tempt them.

Wesel, as a fortress, is comparatively insignificant, but from a secret service point of view it is at present one of the most important places in all Germany. Of course the brain of the espionage system is still in the Wilhelmstrasse, as it has always been. But the difficulty of getting into or out of Germany under war conditions makes it necessary to have an outside "clearing house" through which the information coming from foreign countries can be transmitted to Germany. Holland meet this need admirably, and the connecting link between Holland and Berlin is Wesel. It is espionage headquarters for the whole western front.

When I reached Wesel I found that Captain von Hahnke had been succeeded in command by Captain-Lieutenant Freyer of the Imperial Navy. But the story of "the African" was still remembered, and Captain Freyer at once offered me a position in Rotterdam. I was still in bad head health, but as the work was to be indoors I accepted the offer and went on to Rotterdam, not a little curious to see the actual workings of the service of which the world has heard so much.

The chief of the German secret service in Holland, I had been told, was Captain Vollard, a German navy officer, whose falsified passport—without which he could not remain in

The Netherlands—represents him to be the manager of a big German newspaper, "Hamburger Freinderblatt." He lives in the Claacs de Vrieselaam, in Rotterdam, and I drove past the number given me—an unpretentious house—dismissed my taxi a few blocks further on, and walked back to present myself.

At the door of the house a little girl, not more than fourteen years old, was standing. "Are you Herr ——?" she asked as I came up. Very much surprised, I answered that I was.

"Come in," said the little girl. "Captain Vollard is expecting you," and I was shown into a big waiting room from which a number of doors led into other apartments. All these doors, and all the doors I had passed on the way upstairs were closed, but presently one of them opened and I was shown into Captain Vollard's office. With him were several officers I had met before and knew to be in the secret service under Freyer. Greetings were exchanged and then Captain Vollard and I were left alone. I should add, perhaps, that at Wesel I had retrieved my English togs and was wearing them once more.

It was decided that I should go to work that afternoon, and while we were arranging details the telephone bell jingled. Vollard reached for the instrument, and from his conversation I was astounded to learn that he was talking to Captain Freyer's office in Wesel. The border was closed, and there was supposedly no telephone connection between Germany and Holland.

Captain Vollard noticed my surprise, and when he had finished talking turned to me. "That," he said, "is one of the secrets with which you are now entrusted. This line is the only one between Holland and Germany. So far as the public knows it does not exist. You will have to do a lot of telephoning over it while you are attached to this office, for all the information I gather here goes to Captain Freyer over this telephone, except what is sent on by special courier."

As we talked a young woman in the early twenties was reading notes from a number of slips of paper to Freyer's office over the telephone. This office is the leak by which all secret service information coming into Holland dribbles into Germany. Captain Vollard himself speaks several languages, and every day reads through the Dutch, French and English papers, checking off the passages which he wishes to have relayed. Two young women translate them and send them on to Wesel in the manner I have just described.

The Captain also has runners out who watch the newspaper bulletins for cable news or other information. The moment anything important is announced, one of these runners jumps into a cab and hurries to Vollard's home. Other runners frequent the cafes and business districts, where they pick up any information they can.

Most French and Belgian spies gather in Poll's Cafe, Rotterdam, while the German spies rather favor the Cafe Swiss. These men,

who might be called the rank and file of the espionage system, for the most part know each other, but do not know the heads of their departments nor the men and women who are doing the special work. They know the men to whom they report, but that is about all, the social line being drawn quite as sharply here as in the army. The runners associate with each other and their superiors keep to themselves.

Runners also watch the steamship piers and report to Vollard's office everything that goes into a vessel bound for Great Britain or France. If there is a consignment of copper, for instance, put aboard a ship, the fact is immediately transmitted to Wesel and from there to Berlin. Does such information seem a comparatively insignificant result to obtain from the use of all this complicated machinery? Then just remember for a moment how strenuously from the outset Germany has objected to the British blockade of her ports and insisted on her right to retaliate by destroying enemy shipping with her submarines, and you will begin to understand how important to her the espionage system is and why the administration of it has been put almost wholly into the hands of naval officers, who have replaced the army men detailed for such work before the war. I believe it is no exaggeration to say that if Germany had not had the maritime information she has received through Holland, she would already be hopelessly beaten.

All spies coming from a foreign country

into Rotterdam report first to Captain Vollard's subordinate, Dr. Brant, who is immediately in control of all the foreign spies. Most of Brant's spies work through commercial houses. There are men going into France and a few into England even, as travelers for houses with whom the British or French have done business for fifty or sixty years. Yet they are spies, though almost always the firms for which they work are ignorant of that phase of their activities. Such spies have been in the employ of Germany for many years. Long ago the Wilhelmstrasse foresaw that when war actually came espionage work would have to be done through neutral countries, and accordingly enlisted the service of men reputably known in the various foreign capitals and ports.

My work in Captain Vollard's office was the translation and forwarding of papers, messages and information. It was not very exciting, but I seemed to be getting on with it well enough, when suddenly the South African in me broke out, and got me into what later promised to be serious trouble.

The original occasion of it was simple enough. I was suddenly ordered to carry some dispatches into Wesel. My health was still wretched, and I had been promised, you remember, that my work would be wholly in the office. So I demurred, and when the matter was pressed, flatly refused to go. That is what I meant by the South African in me breaking out. Insubordination, to a German

bred as well as born there, would be inconceivable. But I not only found it conceivable: I rather enjoyed it.

Hot words passed between Captain Vollard and myself. I did not go to Wesel, but we were never friends after that, and a fortnight later I was recalled to Wesel. That was my only punishment; not a very harsh one for such insubordination as mine had been. But as a matter of fact I believe that I was under suspicion, and that my superiors, instead of imprisoning me, preferred to leave me free in order that they might "get something on me."

My reception at Wesel convinced me that I was thoroughly in disfavor, if not in disgrace. Without ceremony I was ushered into the presence of Captain Freyer, who scowled blackly at me. "———," he said, without formal greeting, "it is the custom of the government to imprison until the end of the war any member of the secret service who returns from a neutral country after having had the slightest trouble with his superiors. Those returning from enemy countries call for a still severer treatment. Your case seems to be somewhat a special one, and I am going to give you one more chance, at the risk of departing from the rules of discipline. I think you can still be of use. You say you are sick. All right, for the present I am going to send you to join the sick company of your regiment at Emmerich. That is all."

So to Emmerich I went, the South African in me more anti-Prussianized than ever. I had

gone through a good deal for Germany, of my own free will. I did not seem to be getting very many thanks. Also, I realized that I stood in some danger. It is much more unhealthy to fall under the displeasure of the German military authorities than it is in Great Britain. The Germans "use powder" freely.

I was ordered to the wounded company of my regiment. You understand just what that means. Since the war began German regiments—there are four companies of a war strength of 400 men each to a battalion and three battalions to a regiment—are made up of two sorts of companies, war companies at the rear and recruit companies at the front. No man can join a wounded company till after service at the front.

To such companies many small favors are granted, and from a German point of view life in them is comparatively easy. Here is the schedule of a day: Five a. m., reveille; 5.20, assembly for black coffee and black bread; 6 a. m. to 11.30 a. m., drill in full marching equipment; then till 2.30, dinner and rest; 2.30 p. m. till 5.30 p. m., more drill, baths, tramps, etc.; 5.30 till 6.45, clean rifles and equipment; 7 p. m., supper, and then freedom till (when taps calls for lights out). If that is easy, you can imagine what active life in a recruit company means.

Every Monday the wounded company is subjected to medical examination, and all members of it who can be returned either to "garrison duty," which means sentry-go about ammunition depots and the like, or to full duty, which means to return to the trenches. That

return is not made in a body, but the old hands are distributed among the recruit companies of each new transport, to exercise a steadying effect on the raw material until it finds itself. Despite the rigid weeding-out to which they are constantly subjected, the wounded companies tend to grow in size as the war goes on. Some of them now contain six hundred men, while the companies in the trenches, despite constant recruiting, are reduced to one hundred and fifty and even less men.

The recruits go to the front with comparative cheerfulness still. Not so the veterans. You have only to watch for a littel the eagerness with which men strive to be retained in a wounded company to realize that however high the command may feel the German soldier who knows what it is from experience has had his fill of war.

Emmerich is a town and fortress on the Dutch frontier of German. I went there under escort and joined the wounded company of the Fifty-seventh, which was assigned to duty there as a border guard. Again I had the delightful feeling that I was only given seeming liberty in the hope that I might trip myself. Indeed, I was informed by an aide of Captain Freyer that a single slip on my part would mean imprisonment until the end of the war, and perhaps worse.

I also learned it was suspected that I had been in communication with the British consul while I was in Rotterdam—a pleasant bit of news.

Before I had been in Emmerich long my illness again became acute. The local police had orders to arrest me if I attempted to leave the town. My mail was under surveillance. I could not even talk with a civilian without being closely watched, and I presume every word I said was noted.

So a disagreeable summer passed. The middle of November, 1915, I took over duty at Emmerich and was put in charge of a telephone station on the main road from the Dutch frontier. Along it great quantities of supplies were continually passing from Holland into Germany. Much of the material was smuggled in. At least the Dutch officials must have winked at its passage. Hundreds of horses went by my station every morning with truck loads of iron, brass and copper and tanks of oil. Of course all the soldiers along the line were required to aid in the passage of this material. I made it my business to mingle with them and cultivate their acquaintance, and they soon regarded me as a fixture there, one of themselves. My purpose in so doing you have probably guessed already.

I was thoroughly sick of the German army and its life and ways. I was continually treated shabbily by my superiors, and well knew that I was under grave suspicion. It seemed to me inevitable that sooner or later some one would see to it that I was imprisoned, if not worse. Furthermore, as I have said, I was always more British than anything else, at heart. Getting into Germany and seeing some fighting had

been an amusing adventure. But now it had ceased to be amusing and I had quite enough of it. I wanted to get out. The question was, how could it be done. I thought I saw a way.

In my company there was an oil merchant from Duesberg, who frequently assisted in passing along consignments of oil, in some of which he had a personal interest. I made a friend of him, and was seen much in his company, often helping him to get the stuff over the border.

One night I took advantage of this fact. I borrowed a bicycle and wandered out among the outposts inquiring for a consignment of oil which I said was about to be smuggled into Germany. None of them had heard of it as yet, and with the excuse I kept continually working toward the outskirts of our lines until I was on a road one side of which was Holland and the other Germany. About 8 p. m. I inquired at an outpost for the mythical oil. The men there knew nothing about it, and friendly suggested that I go on to the next post, a quarter of a mile away. I went—and once I was out of sight I steered across the road into Holland, dropped my bicycle among some bushes and went up a side lane to a farmhouse where a dim light showed.

A Hollander was living there with his wife, who was a Belgian. I was in uniform, and the farmer asked me if I wished to buy supplies. I said I had come to stay, and just then a girl came in to buy some milk. She heard me asking the farmer where I could buy some civilian

clothes which would fit me, and informed me that she lived nearby and had a brother about my size who would undoubtedly sell me clothes. I went home with her and paid the brother 50 gulden, about $25, for a greasy old peasant's suit and a night's lodging. It was the last money I had, with the exception of two marks, which went next day to buy a tie and collar from the local schoolmaster.

I changed into civilian attire, wrapped my discarded uniform in a bundle, crept down to the border and tossed it over to Germany. Then I went back to the farmhouse and had been there half an hour when the door opened and in stalked two Dutch soldiers accompanied by a German saloonkeeper whom I knew.

The soldiers asked me who and what I was. As I spoke Dutch, I told them I was a Hollander. But the saloonkeeper interrupted me continually. "He is no Hollander," he kept on saying. "I know him well. He is a German and he has deserted from the army. You must arrest him. That is the law."

"I am of Dutch descent," I insisted. "I am a South African. My home is in the Transvaal, and I wish to return there. You have no right to stop me. If I was a deserter, where is my uniform? If I had come to Holland in the uniform of a German soldier, then you could arrest me. But as it is, I have as much right to be here as you have."

The soldiers were afraid to take a chance, and I was escorted to the local military head-

quarters and locked up there for the night. Next day the Dutch commandant examined me, and representatives of the authorities at Emmerich appeared, asking to have me returned to them. The commandant was in a quandary. A straw would tip the balance either way. I supplied the straw.

While the wiseacres were at their deliberations, I asked my guards if they would object to my writing and mailing a postcard. As I expected, they gladly gave permission, thinking of course that I would in some way entrap myself.

I addresesd my card to the British consul at Rotterdam. I had crossed the border, I said, in citizen's clothing, and had been taken prisoner by a Dutch outpost. I asked that if I had not reached Rotterdam next morning the consul would take steps to see that I was not further interfered with.

It was a clumsy enough ruse, trumped up hurriedly to meet the exigency of the moment. But it worked. The soldiers showed the card to the commandant. The commandant, seeing me thus officially (?) connected with the British Government, did not dare to return me to Germany. Instead, he let me go.

I had no money at all. But in Sevenaar I had a nodding acquaintance with a tavern keeper, and he took a chance and loaned me the few shillings needed to travel third class to Rotterdam. Third class was quite good enough for me, in my greasy clothes and with a tattered old shawl wrapped about my neck.

In the train I met an escaped French prisoner of war who was being taken to Rotterdam by Dutch soldiers. He had escaped from the mines at Duesberg, as had many others. The train was scarcely in motion when a well-dressed man, evidently a German, engaged the prisoner in conversation.

To me, in my old clothes, no one paid much attention. The well-dressed man asked the Dutch soldiers, casually enough, how the Frenchman had escaped. They shrugged their shoulders and declined to speculate. But the Frenchman started to tell his whole story. I kicked him in the shins, and when he continued to talk, I said to him in French:

"My friend, it is a good rule never to talk on trains. This man speaking to you is a German. If he finds out how you got away, you may be sure no more of your comrades will have a chance to escape."

I could see by the twitching of the German's cheek that he was very much excited by the episode. But he said nothing, and at the next station left the train. At the same station a Belgian got into our compartment, and soon engaged the Frenchman in conversation. Again he started to tell his story. Again I shut him off, and this time deliberately accused the Belgian of being a German spy. I should say here that the rank and file of the German espionage service in Holland is composed of Belgians. In saying that, I mean only men and women born in Belgium. The Belgians as a people are loyal, faithful and patri-

otic, just as they have been pictured to the world. The Belgian born who are in the Kaiser's secret service are no more true Belgians than Benedict Arnold was a true American. There are parasites whose motto is, "Gold is worth as much under one flag as another."

During my trip the Germans had wired through from Sevenaar that there was a German deserter on the train. At Rotterdam, before we could leave the railway terminal, we were obliged to pass inspection by the military authorities. As I passed before the officer in command, a German spy was standing by his side.

"Hello!" he hailed me. "You're a German deserter, aren't you?"

I gave him a glassy eye that would have been a howling success in any countryhouse in England. "What the bally deuce do you mean?" I asked him, cuttingly, "by saying that sort of thing?"

It took me through. He wilted.

When I was in Rotterdam before, on my assignment in the German secret service, I had spent money lavishly. Now it stood me in good stead. From a barber whom I had treated generously, I procured clothes in which to make a decent appearance. My riding togs, alas, were gone forever now!

Once rendered presentable, I sought my old haunts, Pool's and the Cafe Swiss, to hear the gossip of what was going on. After hanging about there long enough to get my bearings I

went to a hotel, and fell in with some Belgians who knew of my connection with the espionage service.

You might think that once in Holland my troubles would be over; and, indeed, those of them that involved personal injury or recapture were; but I had a great many other difficulties to overcome before I could feel, in a manner of speaking, firm ground beneath my feet. For once having got into Holland, my next step was to get out of it—on the side farthest from Germany—and how I was to do that was, for the time being, quite beyond me. But I managed to do it at last.

I lived in a restaurant in Rotterdam, known by the name of Simon's, a great rendezvous for Belgian spies; and in the course of a short time got to know these gentlemen intimately. To them I told my story, and expressed my desire to be quit of Holland, and to get back to my old home in South Africa.

"Well," said one of the them, "have no more fears on that score. If the thing can be done—and I think I can—we will do it for you. At any rate, you may be sure of our help, and that is always something."

These men were as good as their word. They guaranteed my bills in Simon's, where there was a sort of lodging house upstairs. At one time, that section of the house may have been roomy enough, but at the time of which I speak, it was, to say the least, congested. The owner had divided the room into many smaller chambers by the erection of wooden parti-

tions; and each room so made had space for little besides an occupant, and a not over large bed. The partitions were exceedingly thin, and for that reason were practically non-existent so far as sound was concerned, so that when I was not sleeping I was being entertained with a variety of conversation on every known subject, for I could hear everything that was said on my floor. It was very interesting.

I have mentioned, I think, that I tried the British authorities first, but without success. This time I was to have better luck in another direction. After three weeks spent at Simon's, a member of the Belgian espionage system took me to the French Military Attache at The Hague.

I repeated my story in full to that official, and, after he had put a great many shrewd questions to me, calculated to upset my story altogether if the whole was not founded on fact, he assured me that if everything was as I said, the British would play the game, and allow me to get through into England. As an evidence of my sincerity and good faith, he then ordered me to visit Mr. Holdert of the Amsterdam "Telegraaf," and give him the inside story of the workings of the German espionage system in Rotterdam.

Such a story would prove conclusively to both sides that I was with the Allies. I visited Mr. Holdert accordingly, and gave him the story; and the next morning it appeared in full in the pages of the "Telegraaf."

I was then sent back to Rotterdam to await final orders from the French Military Attache, which would be conveyed to me through the Belgian spies. I remained in Simon's Hotel for a week, and at the end of that time was ordered to report to Flushing, where the Belgians took me before the British consul.

That official then issued me a passport that would take me safely across the Channel and allow me to enter England. He informed me that I was to embark for England on the following morning and that I would be expected at Tillbury Docks, where the boat would land.

Accordingly, the following morning I boarded my vessel, the S. S. Princess Juliana, and set sail for England. There were about a hundred people aboard, among whom the South African got along very well; and after the voyage, remarkable for nothing in particular, we arrived safely at Tillbury Docks.

At the docks the pasengers were marshaled into line to await, each in turn, an inspection and general going over by the military. Upon going ashore I began to cast my eyes about for the gentleman I was told would meet me. There was a great concourse of people in the enclosure, and I had not not been told what sort of man to expect, but I spotted him immediately. To a man with a detective's training, there are certain marks about other detectives that are unmistakable. The man I singled out had them in a high degree. I walked up to him at once, and gave him my name. He raised his eyebrows in surprise, and regarded

me with a comical expression of astonishment.

"Well," he said at last, "that beats me!"

I laughed at his wonder and told him it was a simple enough thing to do; that it was not a piece of black magic as he semed to think. He then took me immediately to the military officer who was examining the passengers. This surprised me, for I had expected to stand in line and wait my turn. But I was evidently considered a person of some importance, for we avoided the crowd altogether and went into the office by a side door.

My detective introduced me to the captain, who shook hands with me very cordially and welcomed me to England. When he had gone over my papers and we had had some small conversation together, the captain asked me where I was going to stay! Here was news, indeed! I had confidently expected to be herded into some detention camp and kept there to await the pleasure of the British Government. But no; the captain assured me that I was a free agent and that I might stop at any hotel that appealed to my fancy. I can give you no adequate idea of how that news warmed my heart. I had returned to England with a great many misgivings as to the manner of my reception; I had hoped to be treated well, I had feared the opposite. But lo! I was received with open arms, and in a manner that indicated I was completely trusted.

That evening the detective took me to London, direct to Scotland Yard. We were too late to see Acting Governor Thompson; and

so, in company with Sergeant Ginhoven, an old Dutchman in the detective service, I went out to seek a hotel. I decided on one in a very short time; not because of its desirability or elegance, but because of its nearness to the Yard. The next morning I saw Mr. Thompson and the military authorities. They asked me to make a detailed report of all the information I had in my posession concerning the German spy system.

I returned to the hotel immediately, and wrote the report on the back of the hotel letter paper, and submitted it. I was informed rather curtly that the report would as handed in would not serve; that I, as a competent detective, should have known better than to make out a report of that sort in such a manner. In short, I was ordered to make out the report all over again; this time on legal foolscap.

It required four weeks to verify the truth of the assertion I made in my report, during which time I had many very pleasant days in London. Indeed, I began to feel very much at home, until one day I was brought up short, and was forced to realize that my position in the community was not what I had imagined it to be. It came about in this way. I had mentioned to Sergeant Ginhoven that I did not care for the hotel at which I was stopping.

"Well," said he, "there are no chains on you my dear, sir. Go anywhere you please."

Accordingly, the next morning we went to Southampton Row, and applied at a private hotel just opposite the Bedford, where I had

stopped on my previous eventful trip to London. The proprietor of the hotel at which we applied was a grim, dour Scotchman, and when Sergeant Ginhoven told him I was a German, he looked me over with a cold, unfriendly eye.

"A German!" he cried. "See here, sir, my father is the greatest hater of Germans in all England; if I was to take him in, he would never forgive me. He'd never live under the same roof with him, and that's a certainty. This is a private hotel, you know, and I don't have to take him in. No, no," he added, "he cannot come in here." And he shut his mouth tightly, and looked grimmer than ever.

This was like a dash of cold water to me. It dampened all my former happiness. I had begun to fancy myself on an equal footing with all I saw or met, and to find one of them discriminating against me, made me feel very much alone, and very much of an outsider. I turned away with something of a heavy heart, but Sergeant Ginhoven, who saw my depression, laughed the whole thing off good naturedly, and bade me cheer up.

Once outside, he called a taxi, and took me to the Strand Palace, in the Strand. I found the Strand Palace to be an excellent hotel, filled with military officers. The hotel, I was glad to learn, was a public one, and its manager a Swiss. When Sergeant Ginhoven asked him if he would take in a German for whom the government would pay liberally, he smiled broadly and asked, "Why not?"

"Besides," he added, "here we have to take every one. And to be frank, it makes little difference to me what you are. You are welcome for your own sake."

At that, I felt a great deal better. I should have said that the British Government was paying my expenses at the hotel, and allowing me plenty of spending money besides; so that, altogether I had a very pleasant time during the weeks that ensued. I traveled all over London, and so far as I know, was never spied upon.

At the end of the fourth week I was summoned to Scotland yard. When I entered the office I found my self confronting several gentlemen. There were Acting Governor of Scotland Yard Thompon, a Captain Carter, a naval officer, and several others. When I entered Mr. Thompson rose and greeted me; then he took a paper from his desk and went over the points of information I had furnished him with. When he had finished he laid his hand on a sum of money which was lying on his desk. The money, he told me, was mine, in payment for my services. Captain Carter then got up, and in a short, hearty speech, thanked me in the name of the British Government, ending his talk by informing me that I was to go abroad a steamer bound for New York the following morning. Everything had been arranged by them beforehand, and all I had to do was to walk aboard. My getting out of the country was necessary by reason of the law that no enemy alien may remain in Eng-

land. And so, after shaking hands all around, I bade good-bye to them and to England.

On the voyage to New York I again became known as the "South African." The passengers were all exceedingly kind to me; but better than that, I met a most charming English lady aboard, who has since become my wife.

And now that I am in New York I can see that the results of my apparently foolish thirst for adventure are many and beneficial. I have got a liberal education in self-dependency; my wits have been sharpened and my mind broadened; I have gone through adventures that will remain in my memory when all the drab commonplaces of life have faded from it—and last and best, I have got a wife. And the last consideration alone was worth it all.

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